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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

12 October 1966

SUBJECT: SOVIET ACTIONS IN RESPECT OF POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR REGIMES
IN SOUTH ARABIA*

1. Soviet actions in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula will be governed in large measure by the nature of the successor regime that the British are able to leave in South Arabia, although the Soviets will have little to do with shaping that regime. The USSR's activity will also be influenced, though to a lesser degree, by such external factors as the outcome of the Saudi Arabian-UAR dispute and the consequences of Egyptian efforts to run Yemen as a colony, which could serve either to increase or decrease the options available. The course of Soviet rivalry with the Chinese Communists may also have some effect on Soviet activity in South Arabia.

* This memorandum was prepared by the Near East Staff of the Office of National Estimates and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence for presentation to the IRG/NEA. It is to be read in conjunction with NIE 30-1-66, "The Outlook for South Arabia," 8 September 1966.

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2. There are three broad categories of successor arrangements which might emerge in South Arabia, each embracing a number of possible variants. In the first instance, the South Arabian Federation or some similar entity may survive, perhaps ruled by a tribal or military strong man. As NIE 30-1-66 states, the chances of survival of such a state are not bright, but neither are they nonexistent. Any such regime would probably retain an essentially conservative outlook, friendly to the West -- at least as long as the latter provides assistance (as Britain has promised to do until 1971). Saudi Arabia would probably have considerable influence over this sort of state, which would in any event almost certainly be antagonistic to any radical Yemeni state. In this situation, Moscow would probably not find a receptive field for its activity in South Arabia and extensive relations are unlikely to develop.

3. The second -- and somewhat more likely -- general category of possible developments in South Arabia is for the Federation to fragment. While this could mean splitting into as many parts as there are states in the Federation, the small size and lack of resources of many of them would argue against such a development. It seems more likely that two broad groupings might appear -- one

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conservative and one progressive or radical. In such an eventuality, Aden might become an independent entity, or it might join in a greater Yemen along with some of the westerly sheikhdoms of the Federation which are contiguous to Yemen. (This greater Yemen might be a truncated version of the present state, involving only the southern Shafa'i part.) The willingness of such a "nationalist" Aden to join Yemen or to seek UAR support would depend in large measure on developments in Egyptian handling of Yemeni affairs. The Adeni "nationalist" leaders are in many cases close and long time associates of the Yemenis who have been ousted from government and jailed by the UAR, and they are not, on the whole, working to hand Aden over to Egypt but to free it from foreign domination. Thus the radicals may even be wary of receiving Soviet military equipment from the UAR if this entails a substantial Egyptian military presence in Aden.

4. The third possibility is that virtually all of South Arabia would fall under the domination of a radical nationalist regime. In view of the scarcity of radical talent in the sheikhdoms and the fact that the more conservative elements have most of the military power while the town radicals have virtually none, the prospects for this are not likely. Such

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a government probably would not have a very firm grip on internal security and would probably want external assistance, and the USSR would be an obvious source of aid. However, the same constraints in respect of association with Yemen and of assistance from the UAR would apply here as in category two.

5. In virtually all of the imaginable cases in which South Arabia might develop, the USSR and other Communist countries will have an official, diplomatic presence, providing them cover for clandestine activities. (A possible exception would be a conservative Federation, heavily influenced by the Saudis, but even this is quite remote). In the event of some version of categories two or three evolving, a radical or a progressive regime would probably seek assistance from the USSR -- and from anyone else willing to contribute. The Soviets would probably be willing to expend what for this area would be significant amounts of money, say some tens of millions of dollars annually, but they might have some difficulty in finding a government sufficiently effective to be worth aiding. Aden without its hinterland is tiny, vulnerable to harassment, and of itself of very little value. A "Greater Yemen" state would be more attractive, but would be under siege from north and east and might be an expensive proposition to

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support. Military aid might be part of a Soviet assistance package, and this would probably involve a Soviet training mission.

6. In general, the Soviets are considerably limited in the range of options open to them in South Arabia, and, at least initially, would probably work with the UAR if the latter was still maintaining a significant presence in Yemen and was on good terms with the South Arabian radicals. Likewise an effort by the USSR to take precedence over the UAR in the area would risk such a disruption of UAR-Soviet relations that Moscow is unlikely to try it. Over the years, the USSR has invested so much energy and effort into castigating the West for its "imperialist" presence in under-developed countries that the option of replacing Western with Soviet bases is almost certainly foreclosed. Further, the Soviets are constrained by their distaste for any conflict between Middle Eastern powers which might lead to direct US intervention. For Moscow does not want to be faced with the necessity for any direct confrontation with the US.

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